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BOOK REVIEWS

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PÄDAGOGIUM, BAND I: DIE PSYCHOANALYTISCHE METHODE,<sup>1</sup> von Dr. OSCAR PFISTER, Pfarrer und Seminarlehrer in Zürich; mit einem Geleitwort von Prof. Dr. S. FREUD. Verlag von Julius Klinkhardt, Leipzig u. Berlin. Pp. 490.

This book is noteworthy, not alone because of the nature of the subject and the interesting manner in which it is handled, but also because the author is at once a clergyman, an educator, and an expert psychoanalyst, and has found useful, in each of these capacities, the method and the principles which the book describes. The introduction by Professor Freud, the able founder of the psychoanalytic method, calls attention to these facts in suitable terms, and forms a valuable addition to the remaining portion.

It may be known to the readers of this journal that the term psychoanalysis is applied to a method elaborated many years ago by Professor Freud of Vienna<sup>2</sup> for a strictly therapeutic purpose—namely, as a means of relieving a class of patients presenting such symptoms as morbid fears, distressing obsessions, and compulsive acts and thoughts, for which no adequate or systematic mode of treatment had been found available. It soon became clear, however, that the method thus indicated meant a good deal more than a step in therapeutic progress. It meant also an advance along the whole line of studies through which it is sought to gain a more intimate knowledge of human nature and human motives, and has laid the foundations for a very considerable revision of our beliefs respecting psychology and the history of childhood and of folklore, besides proving of great assistance in determining the underlying influences which have prompted men to devote themselves to religion, philosophy, and art. The essence of the matter lay in the demonstration that it is possible, through a sharpening of the memory, through the legitimate use of reasoning by inference, and through the study of one's dreams (which, when properly analyzed,

<sup>1</sup>To appear in English later.

<sup>2</sup>The first impulse in this direction (not to speak of the work of Charcot or the important pioneer work of Janet) was given by Dr. Jos. Breuer of Vienna.

are found to reveal one's deeper motives to a remarkable extent), to gain a kind of first-hand evidence with regard to the history of one's inner, largely unconscious, life, such as had never previously been furnished in a convincing, thorough-going, and scientific form, and cannot be obtained in any other manner.

It is one of the merits of Dr. Pfister's exposition that he emphasizes—what has been overlooked by many of the critics of this movement—that Freud's generalizations were arrived at as a result of the patient accumulation, through many years of painstaking research, of a vast number of important facts. Whatever theorizing he has done has been on the basis of these facts. As new students took up the same task with him and by the same method, these facts were usually verified afresh, one by one, and to the astonishment of each investigator in turn. The mode of interpretation of the observations and the theories of origin of the various disorders above noted have been modified both by Freud himself and by others who have worked in the same field, so much so that of late years considerable divergence of opinion on certain points has become evident; but the accuracy of the large series of observations which formed the basis of the earlier statements has been but rarely called in question, except by outspoken opponents of the whole movement. As time went on, it became evident, on the one hand, that these psychopathic disorders did not stand alone but passed over by insensible degrees into the far more numerous, in general anti-social, peculiarities of persons classified as normal; and, on the other hand, that in making a study of this whole group of peculiarities and symptoms, one necessarily comes up against the exceedingly important and engrossing problem of the psychology of childhood, as representing a period of vast significance, in certain respects, for the establishment of character and temperament.

One should say "in certain respects," because, while it is true that the habits formed in childhood determine those of later life far more than is commonly believed, it is evident also that the ability to work with conscious volition for the best outcome of our evolution does not reach its climax until a later period.

Many thoughtful persons had indeed become aware that the intense and never-ending struggle variously described as the contest of the carnal, or the animal nature against the spiritual nature, of the immature tendencies against the maturer tendencies, of pleasure against duty, of a partial self-expression against a completer self-expression, in fine, of the assertion of one's self as an a-social individual against the assertion of one's self as a "*Glied-*

*ganzen*," to use Froebel's term, begins during childhood in good earnest. Previous to the investigations of Freud, however, it was impossible that the full significance of this beginning should have been known, because the history of childhood itself (whether of the man or of the race) had been understood only to a very inadequate extent. The writer of this review has recently heard an eminent psychologist declare that in presenting the subject of emotion to his classes, he has learned to distinguish sharply between pre-Freudian and post-Freudian periods of knowledge of what emotion practically means.

Many children, of course, contain in themselves at the outset the "promise and potency" of progress to such a degree that everything which they experience and everything which they do seems to point onward to something better. And this desirable situation is sufficiently well marked with even the great majority of children for their parents and teachers to accept them as conforming to "normal" types, even when an accurate statement would not bear out this estimate. On the other hand, there is now much evidence to show that every child is wooed by temptations to dwell on the sense-elements of his experiences, not as pointing to a future spiritual meaning, but rather in and for themselves alone (that is, as affording materials for self-indulgence), and that many children do this to such a degree that they can never afterwards succeed in shaking themselves free from this tendency. In this fashion specific cravings of one or another sort become established, which may be so strong that their presence, even though unperceived, may check, to a notable degree, the further development of the spiritual life. Sometimes the child seems to protest and to react strongly against these early tendencies, with such vehemence as to form habits of an opposite sort; but in spite of this, his protest may amount only to a yielding to the same temptation in another form. Thus, to offer one illustration out of many that could be given, it becomes clear that such qualities as self-abnegation, self-reproach, over-conscientiousness, and the like, in spite of the fact that they may contain elements of real sublimation and may have owed their existence to a reaction against real faults, often constitute a new means of perpetuating egotistic self-admiration or self-indulgence.

More important still is the discovery—and here again one should distinguish between the sufficiently familiar general principle and that detailed knowledge which alone gives us the information that we need in practice—that the child very quickly learns to crowd out of sight ("repress") great numbers of sensuous or self-seeking

tendencies which his own feeling for better things and the influence of society have taught him to reprobate and avoid, and yet at the same time to retain them as a hidden source of illicit pleasures and undying cravings, without realizing that he is doing this. The reactions just mentioned might be used also in illustration of this point. Then begins that long course of self-deceit by which, in greater or less measure, perhaps every human being finds his value as member and representative of an ideal community more or less impaired. We all lead, in a sense, double lives, and the hidden life of the *alter ego*, to the thorough exploitation of which these researches have been dedicated, makes itself felt by keeping alive a series of hidden impulses and desires—often innocent enough if rightly understood and properly utilized—from which we would fain think ourselves free, and which show themselves externally as fears and doubts. Thus fear is often the disguise under which desire masquerades, and, in analogous fashion, the doubt about some apparently external problem conceals a far more real doubt which has some personal craving as its actual cause and is thus a doubt about one's ability to resist this or that temptation. This instinctive attempt to keep alive in some new form the cravings which it had been sought to get rid of in their original form, often colors and modifies the most serious efforts of adult life.

It has been a notable service on the part of Dr. Pfister that he has studied carefully, from the standpoints here outlined, and others equally important, a number of the religious movements of earlier days and the personal history of their exponents, and has thus supplemented the descriptive histories of religion in significant respects.

In similar manner he and others have sought to make clear the kind of aid which this mode of studying human motives can bring to the cause of moral reform. Many of the bad habits into which children often fall, such as habits of lying and stealing (which may take on a compulsive form), can be shown to be substitutes for passionate cravings of a self-indulgent, usually sexual, nature, or of a craving for some sort of egotistic self-assertion, and the thorough-going recognition of this fact, on the part of the child, has often been followed by excellent results. The same statement may be made of the dipsomanias and other compulsive tendencies of the adult.

It must not be thought that these efforts at reform can be undertaken lightly on the part of either patient or educator or physician. To attempt such a task often means an attempt to revise one's character and temperament, a revision to be carried out by means of a sort of living over again of one's past life, and rebuilding it,

as it were, on the basis of a wider knowledge and a broader vision of one's possibilities and purposes.

It is true, of course, that strong influences, whether of a personal nature or as provided by work or by religion or by both, may enable a person not only to repress but effectually to suppress, the unfavorable elements of his past life. But this result cannot be counted on, and even if it could be it would still remain true that if such a person has the opportunity, in addition to this, to revise the misunderstood conflicts with unlucky outcome to which he may have been exposed, he would usually do well to avail himself of this chance. In so doing he would only be assuming a responsibility which is of a wholly natural sort. For the external problems which each individual is called upon to meet are foreshadowed in his internal problems. A man's religion and conduct are likely to be freer from hampering mistakes if he has learned to subject the past decisions which he has made to a critical and scientific scrutiny, carried on with the aid of some one who has studied the psychological questions involved, in the light of the experience, not of one person alone but of many persons. The temptations inherent in his own nature, his own "original sin" (if one wishes to adopt the old term), are the problems which present themselves most naturally and most cogently to every one as problems for his study, in preparation for "taking the cities" against which he must march. It is not morbid introspection but a rational study of one's self (a process which is the very enemy of morbid introspection and its antidote) that is here at stake. Can any one believe that Dante's progress into Paradise would have counted for what it did to him, had it not been preceded by his journey through the Inferno of his own temptations and the Purgatory of his convalescence? It is difficult to fight against an unseen enemy, and the attempt to place one's self wholly before one's self is like the attempt to make visible an unseen foe, and thus to avoid such disasters as befell Braddock's gallant army in its vain battle against the Indians in the wilderness of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Pfister deals with these important questions, and many others not here touched upon, in a thoroughly scientific spirit, and yet from the standpoint of the practical and moral educator and the religious teacher. The book is divided into two parts. The first of these deals at length with the modifications of psychological theory which these new investigations have made necessary, and shows how by the aid of this newer mode of looking at the subject it is possible to explain physical and mental symptoms of the psy-

choneurotic illnesses better than they have ever been explained before.

In this part also a variety of important traits are dealt with such as show themselves among persons not to be classified as patients.

Dr. Pfister's views expressed in this theoretical portion are for the most part in accordance with those of Freud and other prominent psychoanalysts, although important divergences of judgment appear which he does not hesitate to state clearly. He has done some valuable original work bearing on some of the problems here discussed. The researches with regard to *kryptographia* and *kryptolalia* deserve especial mention, the more so that these phenomena have figured in religious history. It has long been one of the general theses of the leaders of this school that events do not occur without causes in the sphere of mental manifestations any more than in the sphere of material phenomena, and that when people seem to talk gibberish or nonsense, as under the conditions just referred to, or when their conduct seems irrelevant, emotional causes for these apparently causeless happenings are to be found if any one is willing to make diligent search for them. Dr. Pfister has shown, for example, that one may challenge a person to invent a long gibberish word or sentence, and then may discover, through adequate analysis, that a meaning or a series of meanings, often of an important sort, have underlain it. The criticism has often been made in regard to just such claims as this that psychoanalysts go very often much too far. It is quite possible that from time to time they may have done so, and that in this or that particular instance occult meanings may have been read into what was really nonsense. Nevertheless, the important point is that sense does unquestionably often lie concealed behind apparent nonsense, and that deep emotions of important sorts for the welfare of the person who has to deal with them may lie behind disguises which the physician and the teacher can and should learn to strip off. The motives of most men are mixed and the motives which are the most cogent are of a different sort from those which lie upon the surface. For this reason, to acquire the power of getting at the truth, for better or for worse, beneath its outward cloak, is important enough to justify the risk of sometimes going wrong. Many pieces of rock, of doubtful value, may be gathered in on the chance that they may prove ore-bearing. After all, it is the patient, or the person whoever he may be that desires to learn to know himself at closer range, to whom the final judgment in all cases should be left. This is a cardinal point

in psychoanalytic doctrine. Interpretations should never be forced upon unwilling recipients, hardly even offered to them; but they should be led to recognize, what is obviously true, that in dealing with their own unconscious selves they are dealing with a very subtle quantity—often a subtle adversary, one might say—and yet that within they have their own consciousness as a touchstone which can enable them to judge as to the truth or falsity of the conclusions at which, with the aid of the physician or the teacher, they arrive. Every one knows that the anatomy and physiology of the brain are complex matters. But it is not so often realized that what one might call the anatomy and the physiology of the mind are far more complex still.

The second part of the book is taken up with the details of method and the conditions necessary on the part of the patient and physician before a successful treatment should be attempted.

Then comes a summary of fifty pages, dealing with the practical outcome of this method, whether applied as a means of treatment in illness or as a help to the teacher, and with a number of practical and theoretical questions, such as the relation of the child to its parents, the proper attitude of the teacher, the relative value of authority and freedom, asceticism, confession, punishment, and various problems relating to sexual, moral, and religious instruction.

Whatever criticism this or that person might be inclined to offer, here or there, the final judgment of every reader who is sympathetic with the important movement described and who looks for well-defined, fearless, and honest statements presented in a straightforward and unvarnished manner, will not be disappointed in the perusal of this volume.

In conclusion I would offer a somewhat free translation of a few lines which occur on page 481 of Part II. An apology is perhaps due the author for the liberty taken in inverting two sentences. This seemed desirable on account of the absence of the context with which they occur in the original. The sentiments here expressed have reference to the theory of which much is made in the course of the work, and which has at least considerable value as a working hypothesis. This theory is that we may look upon the formation of the character, temperament, and conduct of every human being as determined in considerable part by the fact that he starts life with what, for convenience' sake, may be called a reservoir, or, potentially, a stream of living energy (*libido*), the function of which is, primarily, to enable him to play his part as



perpetuator of his race, but which may be converted into a means for making him a useful member of society in any sense. It would take us too far afield to discuss the philosophical merits of this theory, which, as the author might agree, could perhaps be rendered more intelligible if made subservient to the general doctrine of "self-activity," which has played so large a part in philosophical thought. However this may be, the important point remains that when the whole matter is looked at in a purely practical way, every individual does find himself possessing or possessed by a great stream of energy which may enable him to expend upon his fellow-men love and devotion, which may be sensual, or may be disinterested, or which, again, may enable him to follow the highest aims of the religious life. If this stream of energy does not find suitable outlets in the direction of disinterested well-doing and of active work, it is likely to lend itself to the cultivation of personal egotism and personal self-indulgence.

The paragraphs referred to run about as follows:

"Evidence has been offered in the foregoing pages to support the view that one of the most important tasks which presents itself to the young child, is that of finding, at an early age, suitable objects on which to expend his interest and love. If he does not find such outlets, his interest and love are likely to turn inward upon himself, and thus to lead to the formation of habits of introspection, debilitating day-dreams, apprehension, a hostile sense of terror, a suicidal weariness of life; or, to serious disorders of the nervous functions. This being so, it may be said that human happiness and human power are largely dependent, first on the relationships which are early formed between the child and those about him, especially the father and mother and such persons as in a psychological sense come to occupy their places; next, upon the capacity which the child may be led to display for turning the energy first exhibited in his earliest instincts upon the higher, and eventually the highest, means of promoting the welfare of the community as a whole."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Important as the matter of this book is, it should not be assumed that the reading of it is a light task. The author's style, though precise, is not fluent, and the reader, if unfamiliar with the subject, must be prepared to find much that is strange and even for a time repellent.